

Veterans Legislative Monitor

Congressman Jim Nussle

Manchester, Iowa

Jim Nussle's Agenda for Iowa...

***Protect our Nation
with Homeland
Security***

***Strengthen the
Family Farm***

***Fair Taxation &
Responsible Budgets***

***Long-term
Energy Strategies***

***Retirement Security
for All Iowans***

***Modernize Medicare
& Ensure Health
Care Access***

***Student-centered
Education with
Local Control***

***Keep Promises
Made to Our
Nation's Veterans***

***Grow Our Economy
to Create Jobs***

Summer 2003

Nussle Agenda to Keep Promises to Our Nation's Veterans

"The sacrifices made by the American men and women who put on military uniforms and agreed to defend and protect our nation's freedoms must never be forgotten by the government or by their fellow citizens. The promises made to these veterans must be promises that are kept. I will continue supporting legislative initiatives that aim to make their lives better, such as protection and improvement of veterans' benefits and improved health care."

Jim Nussle

Jim is working to achieve a positive legislative agenda for Iowa's veterans. Jim has worked on Iowa's veteran priorities since coming to Congress and will continue his work on these priorities in the 108th Congress.

After countless meetings with Iowa veterans, as well as through letters, e-mails and phone calls from veterans, he has created the following goals.

Goals to Keep Our Nation's Promise to Our Veterans:

1. Ensure Timely Access to Health Benefits in Iowa
2. Ensure Timely and Accurate Responses to Veterans' Concerns
3. Ensure Access to Disability Benefits
4. Improve Education Benefits
5. Meet the Challenges of America's Newest Veterans
6. Fully Fund Concurrent Receipts for the Most Disabled Veterans

To achieve the goals to help keep our nation's promise to our veterans, Jim has sponsored and co-sponsored many pieces of legislation, and as the House Budget Committee Chairman, he has written many veterans' items into his budget. You will find a listing of these items on the following pages.

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Nussle's Veterans Agenda Legislation:**FY2004 Budget Resolution (H.Con. Res. 95)****Keeps Promise to Veterans**

- Provides \$63.8 billion for veterans' programs, a 10.7% increase over FY03.
- Provides \$27 billion for VA medical care, \$225 million for medical facilities to increase service.
- Provides for spending for veterans to rise to \$77.5 billion by FY2013.
- *Constructed by Rep. Nussle, approved by the House of Representatives and Senate on April 11, 2003.*

Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Consolidation Action

- Letter to VA Secretary Principi in January 2002 expressed concern with VA decision to consolidate Iowa's VISN with the VISN from 3 other states.
- Discussion of quality of care in VISN 14 and the possibility of improving service through the merger.
- *VA's response in March 2002 states: no VA facility closures in Iowa.*

Rock Island Arsenal

- Letters to Department of Defense and Congressional Appropriations Committees to ensure the safety and victory of tomorrow's veterans by pushing for new and improved defense programs at the Rock Island Arsenal, including a new mortar system for the Marines and more cost-efficient practices to ensure the continued viability of the Arsenal, a major employer in Eastern Iowa.
- *Army response confirms continuation of past commitments to the Arsenal.*

National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (H.R. 4546)

- Authorizes a \$39 billion increase in defense spending from fiscal year 2002 to provide for national defense priorities such as increased military manpower, critical readiness, and counter-terrorism.
- Authorizes **funding of concurrent receipt** for the Purple Heart recipients.
- Authorizes a 4.1 percent military pay raise.
- *Approved by the Congress on November 13, 2002. Signed into law by the President on Dec. 2, 2002.*

Appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year (FY) 2003 (H.J. Res. 2)

- Provides a \$2.5 billion increase over FY 2002 for VA medical care.
- *Approved by Congress on February 13, 2003. Signed into law by the President on Feb. 20, 2003.*

Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act (H.R. 1683)

- Increases service-connected compensation benefits, dependency and the indemnity compensation benefits to deceased family members for FY2004.
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on May 22, 2003.*

Veterans Health Care Cost Recovery Act (H.R. 1562)

- Strengthens the Department of Veterans Affairs ability to collect reimbursements from third parties to recover costs of medical care provided to veterans - ultimately will mean millions of more dollars available for veterans health care services.
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on May 20, 2003.*

Flag Desecration Amendment (H. J. Res. 4)

- Proposes an amendment to the Constitution authorizing the Congress to prohibit the physical desecration of the U.S. flag.
- *Co-sponsored by Rep. Nussle.*
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on June 3, 2003.*

Veterans Entrepreneurship and Benefits Improvement Act (H.R. 1460)

- Provides disabled veterans with assistance in starting and growing small businesses.
- Allows veterans to use education benefits to enroll in courses offered by small business development centers and other approved institutions.
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on June 24, 2003.*

Veterans Health Care Improvement Act (H.R. 2357)

- Directs the VA to appoint chiropractors to the Veterans Health Administration.
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on July 21, 2003.*

Veterans' Grave Markers (H.R. 1351)

- Removes the unmarked restriction on veterans' grave markers. Currently, veterans' graves are not allowed to obtain a veteran marker if they already have a private marker. This legislation would allow veterans to receive veteran markers regardless of whether there is a current marker or headstone.
- *Co-sponsored by Rep. Nussle.*

Veterans' Outpatient Care Access Act (H.R. 435)

- Directs the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs to provide needed medical services from sources outside the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) when veterans are informed that the waiting period for such services in a VA clinic will be six months or longer. Basically, if a veteran tries to get a doctor's appointment at a VA clinic and has to wait longer than six months, the VA would be required to provide healthcare outside of the VA clinic.
- *Co-sponsored by Rep. Nussle.*

Medication and Pharmacies (H.R. 709)

- Allows veterans to have prescriptions written by their personal physicians to be filled by VA pharmacies.
- *Co-sponsored by Rep. Nussle.*

Veterans' Hospital Emergency Repair Act (H.R. 811)

- Authorized \$550 million over two years to repair dilapidated and obsolete VA medical facilities. VA Secretary may choose individual projects recommended by VA's capital investment board.
- *Approved by the House of Representatives on Mar. 27, 2001. Senate failed to take action.*

Stuart Collick - Heather French Henry Homeless Veterans Assistance Act (H.R. 2716)

- Improves and consolidates providing benefits and services for homeless veterans.
- *Approved by the Congress on December 11, 2001. Signed into law by the President on Dec. 21, 2001.*

Congressman Jim Nussle**Manchester, Iowa****Veterans' Survivor Benefits Improvements Act (H.R. 801)**

- Expands Service members Group Life Insurance (SGLI) to include spouse and children, and extends last year's increase of the SGLI maximum (\$250,000) retroactively to October 1, 2000 to cover military personnel who have died in more recent service-connected tragedies. H.R. 801 also increases burial and funeral allowances from \$1,500 to \$2,000 for veterans dying from service-connected conditions (\$300 to \$500 for other veterans) and doubles the burial plot allowance from \$150 to \$300.
- *Included in the Fiscal Year 2002 Budget (H. Con. Res. 83) approved by the House of Representatives and Senate on May 9 and 10, 2001. Approved by the Congress on May 25, 2001. Signed into law by the President on June 5, 2001.*

World War II Memorial (H.R. 1696)

- Orders the beginning construction of the World War II Memorial.
- Ends years of delays by groups opposed to the memorial for environmental reasons.
- *Approved by the Congress on May 22, 2001. Signed into law by the President on May 28, 2001.*

Pearl Harbor Remembered (S. Con Res. 44)

- Expresses the sense of the Congress regarding National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. The measure pays tribute to the United States citizens who died in the attack, and the members of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association.
- *Approved by the Senate on Nov. 15, 2001. Approved by the House of Representatives on November 27, 2001.*

21st Century Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act (H.R. 1291)

- Increases the monthly education benefit by nearly double over three years, putting the dream of a college education within the reach of more veterans. The FY 2002 budget accommodates a three-year phased increase in monthly education benefits from \$650 to \$1100.
- *Included in the Fiscal Year 2002 Budget (H. Con. Res. 83) approved by the House of Representatives and Senate on May 9 and 10, 2001.*
- *Approved by the Congress on Dec. 13, 2001. Signed into law by the President on Dec. 27, 2001.*